

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for updating network appliances, comprising:
determining an urgent update;
creating an urgent update notification (UUN) associated with the urgent update;
sending the UUN to the network appliances as messages; and
providing the urgent update to the network appliances.
2. The method of Claim 1, wherein sending the UUN to the network appliances as messages further comprises sending the messages through specific message ports of the network appliances.
3. The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one of the network appliances is a message protector configured to protect messages of a specific protocol, and wherein at least one of the messages is conformed to that specific protocol and at least one of the message ports is dedicated to that protocol.
4. The method of Claim 3, wherein at least one of the messages is a SMTP conformed message and at least one of the message ports is port 25.
5. The method of Claim 1, wherein each message includes a special format that distinguishes it from normal messages.
6. The method of Claim 3, wherein the special format includes at least one of a special header, a special subject line, and special content in the body of the message.
7. The method of Claim 1, wherein providing the urgent update to the network appliances comprises enabling the network appliances to obtain a log that includes the urgent update.

8. The method of Claim 1, wherein further comprising:
collecting the IP addresses of the network appliances when the network
appliances establish a connection to obtain updates; and
storing the IP addresses in a log.

9. The method of Claim 8, wherein further comprising removing out-of-date IP addresses from the log.

10. The method of Claim 9, wherein sending the UUN to the network appliances comprises sending a message with the UUN to each IP address in the log.

11. The method of Claim 10, wherein the IP address is up-to-date.

12. The method of Claim 1, wherein the method is operable on at least one of a server, a network appliance, and a dedicated platform.

13. A method for obtaining updates, comprising:
receiving a message;
in response to determining that the message includes an UUN associated with an urgent update,
immediately establishing a connection with a server;
obtaining the urgent update from the server; and
installing the urgent update.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the message conforms to a specific protocol and is received through a message port dedicated to that protocol.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein the protocol includes a SMTP protocol and the message port includes port 25.

16. The method of Claim 13, wherein the message includes a special format that distinguishes it from normal messages.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein determining that the message includes a UUN comprises detecting the special format.

18. The method of Claim 16, wherein obtaining the urgent update from the server comprises obtaining a log that includes the urgent update.

19. The method of Claim 16, further comprising obtaining updates from the server at pre-determined intervals.

20. The method of Claim 1, wherein the method is operable on at least one of a server, a network appliance, a router, a switch, and a firewall.

21. A system for managing a network, comprising:
an update server configured to determine updates and to provide the updates to network appliances, the update servers being further configured to determine an update that is urgent and to send an UUN about the urgent update to each network appliance;

a network appliance configured to periodically obtain updates from the update server, the network appliance being further configured to receive from the update server an UUN associated with an urgent update and to immediately obtain the urgent updates from the update server.

22. The system of Claim 21, wherein the update server is further configured to collect IP addresses of the network appliances in conjunction with periodic update requests, store the IP addresses in a log, and remove an IP address from the log when the IP address is out-of-date.

23. The system of Claim 21, wherein the update server is further configured to send the UUN as a message to each network appliance through a specific message port.
24. The system of Claim 21, wherein the update server is further configured to enable the network appliances to connect to the update server and to obtain updates.
25. The system of Claim 24, wherein the update server is further configured to determine IP addresses associated with the network appliances when the network appliances connect to the update server for updates.
26. The system of Claim 25, wherein the update server is further configured to send the UUN to the IP addresses.
27. The system of Claim 21, wherein the update server is further configured to maintain a log that includes the updates.
28. The system of Claim 21, a network appliance configured to access the log to obtain the updates.
29. An apparatus for providing updates to network appliances, comprising:
 - means for determining an urgent update;
 - means for creating an UUN associated with the urgent update;
 - means for collecting and maintaining IP addresses of the network appliances;
 - means for sending the UUN to the network appliances as messages; and
 - means for providing the urgent update to the network appliances.
30. An apparatus for obtaining updates, comprising:
 - means for receiving a message;

means for determining when the message includes an UUN associated with an urgent update,

means for establishing a connection with a server in response to when;

means for obtaining the urgent update from the server; and

means for installing the urgent update.